

September 14, 2014

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Jesus said "Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand".

The Epistle today, St Paul's letter to the Church in Rome, Chapter 14, verses 1 thru 12 cannot be clearer about one of our favorite indoor sports as Christians, that is, trying to change each other as human beings.

There is no question in my mind that everyone should just be like me..... that would set the world straight. After all I am a Deacon and I know what God expects and that's exactly how I live....and if you have any doubts about that, just ask dear Karen and she will certainly confirm it.

Unfortunately she is home doing my packing for our trip so she is unable to agree with me in person, but if you make a quick call she will undoubtedly say that I, I might even go as far as saying WE, have to be in God's good books, because we live the way He intended.

At a stretch, I will even go as far as saying that you, our friends at Trinity may be included in the category of the righteous.

The scripture today describes so clearly and succinctly, people not knowing how to behave has been a major problem in the church for centuries. All through the history of the church, the problem has existed.

I am absolutely certain that God is pleased with the way WE live -- but there are those others around....oh dear when will they learn?

Those other people, we all know them; they drink beer and they play cards; they go to R rated movies; they smoke cigarettes and hurt themselves more than they are hurting us. Some people actually work, or go to school activities on Sundays.

Some women as they say in England , act like "hussies", they sport the most terrible loud colored clothes and makeup.

People listen to all that loud heavy metal music; they dance inappropriately; they play musical instruments late at night; they even use velcro instead of zippers and buttons like I did. There is an endless list of things that I can think of, just covering us here in this church.

Then we get to the non-Episcopal Christians, even on occasion our friends that share our church building. Why on earth don't other denominations and non-denominational churches all understand the only acceptable way to worship is through our Episcopal Book of Common Prayer that we use here at Trinity?

Then there are the Roman Catholics, the Lutherans ...well we are OK with ECLA...., but not with the Missouri Synod ...and we all understand those differences there right? Then there are all the rest.... a list longer than your arm....there are the chapels...the Mormons, the Quakers, the candlestick makers.

Of course, they all have it wrong.....and how do we know they have it wrong. That is a simple one...because WE have it right !!

Then we have other religions, main line , sideline, byline, if you can name it we humans have developed a label for it. Judaism, Islam, Hindu, Buddhism....all way off the track.

Then languages....why on earth doesn't everyone speak English?

We have members of our own community both within Trinity and outside who only speak and understand Spanish. Why don't they learn English? Then color of skin, gender, sex-orientation, nationality, even the darn Welsh, why should we accept any of these differences?

For those of you who have been paying attention to my words you will have picked up a load of exaggerations and gross errors expressed from this Pulpit in the past six minutes or so.

Deacon John is going on vacation today...perhaps his mind is elsewhere.....well NOT SO my dear friends, my mind is right here. All of us have those moments when through fear, ignorance, frustration whatever, we have fleeting moments of impatience for anyone that appears or thinks differently than ourselves. A sense that we individually are how God intended humankind to be and that any variations from that are an aberration.

This wrong thinking is what is being addressed in today's extract from the Book of Romans.

In the Midwest states of America we view the sun as it changes with the seasons...in the middle of winter it is a wan almost lifeless globe in the sky. In the height of summer the sun is about the same size in the sky but it has the power to burn our skin if we are not protected.

Our dress and appearance changes also by season.

On the northern shores of Alaska, the Inuit Eskimos see the sun as a tiny globe in the sky and there is hardly any heat from this tiny globe whether it is summer or winter. The Eskimos in turn have different features, dress and environment than ours, but they are all governed in part by this tiny sun.

On the equator in Tanzania, Nigeria or Kenya, the sun is this huge red globe pouring out heat all year round. The people native to that land have black skin, they wear less clothes and again they have an environment that is governed in large part by this large eternally hot sun.

The sun is like God..... although it may appear completely different depending on your perspective, nonetheless it is the same loving God.

And the people on whom the sun shines down; although their physical bodies are different than ours, although they speak differently and dress differently.

God loves all us human beings in exactly the same way.

As a world, it appears from the moment of creation, to the news this morning us human beings judge each other. We are Brits or we are Americans, the world needs to know we know best ...and by golly if they don't we are going to show them what freedom and democracy is all about whether they like it or not.

Remember the words in Romans "Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God."

How can it be any clearer than that?

In today's Epistle, we learn that love must be patient and tolerant of other people's views. It begins with our actions towards someone whom we regard as less enlightened than ourselves.

Let us each think about this for a moment and have in our minds eye someone who we regard as having a weak faith or is misguided in their opinions. Someone we would just love to put straight in their beliefs or how they think.

COUNT TO TWENTY.....

Now let us listen to what Paul says to do about it.

"Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions".

I don't think it can be much clearer than that? We are told to accept that person whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.

We are told not to reject that person; not to ignore them; not to treat them in a second-class way.

We must accept them, but not for the purpose of arguing with them. We must not accept them in order to debate with them, expecting to convert them to our way of thinking.

We must just love them ...and let God do the judging....that's His job, not ours !!

Amen.